



# Champagne

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## Best Places to Stay

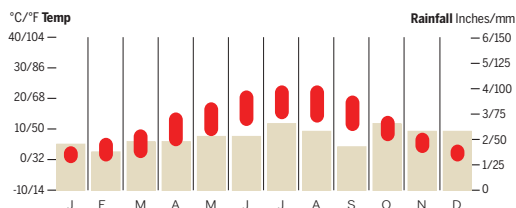
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## Why Go?

Champagne arouses all of the senses: the eyes feast on vine-covered hillsides and vertical processions of tiny, sparkling bubbles; the nose is tantalised by the damp soil and the heavenly bouquet of fermentation; the ears rejoice at the clink of glasses and the barely audible fizz; and the palate tingles with every sip. The imagination and the intellect are engaged as Champagne cellar visits reveal the magical processes – governed by the strictest of rules – that transform the world's most pampered pinot noir, pinot meunier and chardonnay grapes into this region's most famed wines. Happily, despite the prestige of their vines, the people of Champagne offer visitors a warm and surprisingly easy-going welcome, both in the stylish cities and along the Champagne Routes, which wend their way through vineyards and villages to family-run cellars where perfectly aged sparklers can be sampled, savoured, compared and purchased.

## When to Go

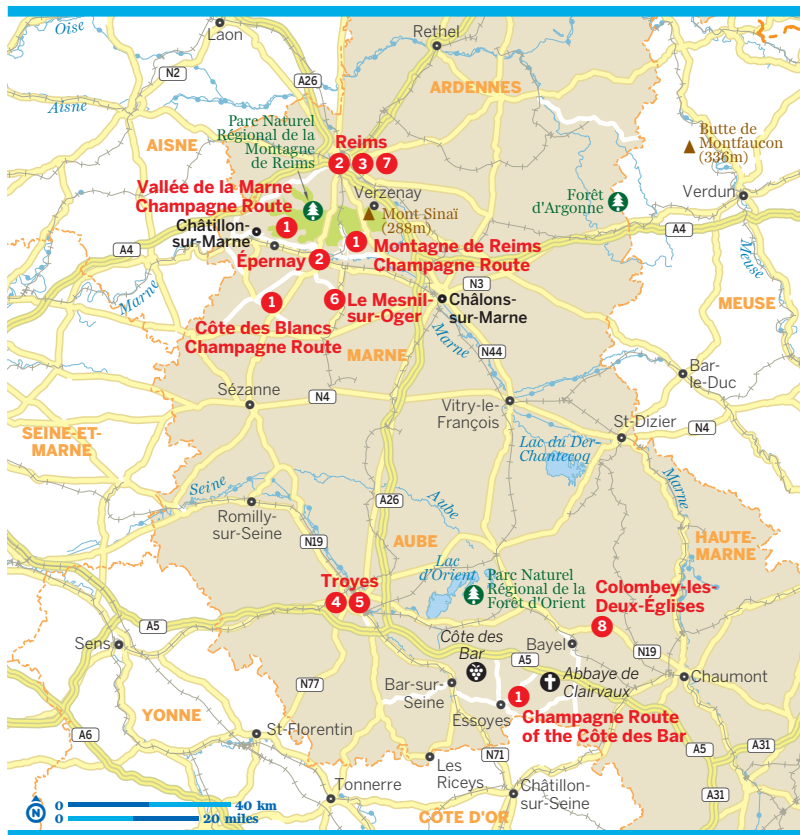
### Reims



**March or early April** Fête du Chocolat (chocolate festival) in the Champagne Route village of Ay.

**June (first week-end)** Fêtes Johanniques in Reims celebrate Joan of Arc with medieval re-enactments.

**Late August to September** Champagne harvest is marked by hard work and celebrations.



## Champagne Highlights

- 1** Explore hillside vineyards, picturesque villages and traditional family wineries along the scenic **Champagne Routes** (p286 and p298)
- 2** Sip Champagne at the end of a **cellar tour** in Épernay (p290) or Reims (p283)
- 3** Climb the tower of **Cathédrale Notre Dame** (p280) in Reims for

- 360-degree views across France's flattest region
- 4** Wander the half-timbered streets of the **old city** (p293) in Troyes
- 5** Imagine caressing the sensuous, pre-industrial hand tools at **Maison de l'Outil et de la Pensée Ouvrière** (p295) in Troyes
- 6** Marvel at traditional Champagne-making techniques and technology

at the **Musée de la Vigne et du Vin** (p289) in Le Mesnil-sur-Oger

- 7** Picture the epoch-defining surrender that ended WWII in Europe at the **Musée de la Reddition** (p281) in Reims
- 8** Immerse yourself in mid-20th century France at the new **Mémorial Charles de Gaulle** (p299) in Colombey-les-Deux-Églises

## History

Champagne's most famous convert to Christianity was the Merovingian warrior-king Clovis I, who founded the Frankish kingdom in the late 5th century and began the tradition of holding royal coronations

in Reims. In the Middle Ages, the region – especially Troyes – grew rich from commercial fairs at which merchants from around Europe bought and sold products from as far afield as the Mediterranean.

A 17th-century Benedictine monk named Dom Pierre Pérignon (c 1638–1715) is popularly believed to have perfected the process of using a second, in-the-bottle fermentation to make ho-hum wine sparkle. In fact, while he did make a significant contribution to the production of still wine, bubbly didn't come to dominate Champagne's wine production until over a century after his death.

In more recent history, the region was host to the end of WWII in Europe when Nazi Germany surrendered unconditionally to Allied Supreme Commander General Dwight D Eisenhower in Reims on 7 May 1945 (see p281).

Today, the *paysages de Champagne* (landscapes of Champagne) are being considered for listing as a Unesco World Heritage Site; a decision is expected in mid-2012.

### Getting There & Around

Champagne, just north of Burgundy's Châtillon-nais and Chablis wine regions, makes a refreshing stopover if you're driving from the Channel ports, Lille or Paris eastward to Lorraine or Alsace, or southeastward towards Dijon, Lyon or Provence.

France's rail lines radiate out from Paris like the spokes of a wheel and, as it happens, Reims, Épernay and Troyes are each on a different spoke (more or less). Although there are pretty good rail connections between Reims and Épernay, the best way to get from Reims to Troyes is by bus. Thanks to the TGV Est Européen line (p981), Reims can be visited on a day trip from Paris.

## Reims

POP 187,650

Over the course of a millennium (816 to 1825), some 34 sovereigns – among them two dozen kings – began their reigns in Reims' famed cathedral. Meticulously restored after WWI and again following WWII, the city – whose name is pronounced something like 'rance' and is often anglicised as Rheims – is endowed with handsome pedestrian zones, well-tended parks, lively nightlife and a brand-new tramway. Along with Épernay (just a half-hour away by train), it is the most important centre of Champagne production and makes an excellent base for exploring the Montagne de Reims Champagne Route.

### Sights

Around town, dark-brown signs shaped like tine-less forks supply titbits of local history in French and English.

## Cathédrale Notre Dame

CATHEDRAL

(www.cathedrale-reims.culture.fr, www.cathedrale-reims.com, in French; place du Cardinal Luçon; ☉7.30am–7.30pm, closed during Sun morning Mass) Imagine the egos, extravagance and the over-the-top costumes of a French royal coronation... The focal point of all the bejewelled pomposity was Reims' cathedral, a Gothic edifice begun in 1211 – and mostly completed 100 years later – on a site occupied by churches since the 5th century. The single most famous event to take place here was the coronation of Charles VII, with Joan of Arc at his side, on 17 July 1429. The structure, a Unesco World Heritage Site since 1991, will celebrate its 800th anniversary in 2011. To get the most impressive first view, approach the cathedral from the west, along rue Libergier.

Seriously damaged by artillery and fire during WWI, the 139m-long cathedral is more interesting for its dramatic history than its heavily restored architectural features – repaired during the interwar years, thanks, in part, to significant donations from the American Rockefeller family.

The finest stained-glass windows are the western facade's 12-petalled **great rose window**; its cobalt-blue neighbour below; and the **rose window** in the north transept (to the left as you walk from the entrance to the high altar), above the Flamboyant Gothic **organ case** (15th and 18th centuries) topped with a figure of Christ. Nearby is a 15th-century wooden **astronomical clock**. There are **windows by Chagall** (1974; a sign explains each panel) in the central axial chapel (directly behind the high altar) and, two chapels to the left, you'll find a **statue of Joan of Arc** in full body armour (1901); there's a second statue of her outside on the square, to the right as you exit the cathedral. The tourist office (50m north of the cathedral) rents audioguides (one/two people €5/9) with self-paced tours of the cathedral.

Feeling as strong as Goliath? (Look for his worn figure up on the west facade, held in place with metal straps.) Then consider climbing 250 steps up the **cathedral tower** (adult/under 26yr €7/free, incl the Palais du Tau €9.50; ☉tours 10am, 11am, 2pm, 3pm & 4pm Tue–Sat & Sun afternoon mid-Mar–Oct, every half-hour 10–11.30am & 2–5pm early May–early Sep) on a one-hour tour. Book at the Palais du Tau.

## Palais du Tau

MUSEUM

(☎03 26 47 81 79; www.palais-du-tau.fr; 2 place du Cardinal Luçon; adult/under 26yr €7/free; ☉9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm, closed Mon) This former archbishop's residence, constructed in 1690, was where French princes stayed before their coronations – and where they hosted sumptuous banquets afterwards. Now a museum, it displays truly exceptional statuary, liturgical objects and tapestries from the cathedral, some in the impressive, Gothic-style Salle de Tau (Great Hall).

## Basilique St-Rémi

BASILICA

(place du Chanoine Ladame; ☉8am-nightfall, to 7pm summer) This 121m-long former Benedictine abbey church, a Unesco World Heritage Site, mixes Romanesque elements from the mid-11th century (the worn but stunning nave and transept) with early Gothic features from the latter half of the 12th century (the choir, with a large triforium gallery and, way up top, tiny clerestory windows). It is named in honour of Bishop Remigius, who baptised Clovis and 3000 Frankish warriors in 498. The 12th-century-style chandelier has 96 candles, one for each year of the life of St Rémi, whose tomb (in the choir) is marked by a mausoleum from the mid-1600s. The basilica is situated about 1.5km south-southeast of the tourist office; take the Citadine 1 or 2 or bus A or F to the St-Rémi stop.

Next door, **Musée St-Rémi** (☎03 26 36 36 90; 53 rue Simon; ☉2-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Sat & Sun), in a 17th- and 18th-century abbey, features local Gallo-Roman archaeology, tapestries and 16th- to 19th-century military history.

## Place Drouet d'Erlon

SQUARE

Lit up like Las Vegas after dark, Reims' pedestrianised main square draws locals in the mood for a bite, a beer or a bit of shopping. Southeast of the **Subé Fountain** (built in 1907) – crowned by a gleaming gold statue of Winged Victory – is **Galerie**

**d'Erlon**, a glass-roofed arcade where you can bask in the shopping vibe of yesteryear. The 12th- to 14th-century **Église St-Jacques** (rue Marx Dormoy), the city's only remaining medieval parish church, has some 1960s stained glass that's so awful it has to be seen to be believed. The blue and white windows in the nave were added in 2010.

## Musée des Beaux-Arts

ART MUSEUM

(Museum of Fine Arts; ☎03 26 35 36 01; 8 rue Chanzy; ☉10am-noon & 2-6pm, closed Tue) This institution's rich collection, housed in an 18th-century abbey, boasts one of only four versions of Jacques-Louis David's world-famous *The Death of Marat* (yes, the bloody corpse in the bathtub), 27 works by Camille Corot (only the Louvre has more), 13 portraits by German Renaissance painters Cranach the Elder and the Younger, lots of Barbizon School landscapes, some art-nouveau creations by Émile Gallé, and two works each by Monet, Gauguin and Pissarro.

## Musée Hôtel Le Vergeur

MUSEUM

(☎03 26 47 20 75; 36 place du Forum; adult/child €4/free; ☉2-6pm Tue-Sun) In a 13th- to 16th-century town house, highlights include a series of furnished period rooms (kitchen, smoking room, Napoléon III's bedroom), engravings by Albrecht Dürer and a stunning Renaissance facade facing the interior garden.

## Musée de la Reddition

MUSEUM

(Surrender Museum; ☎03 26 47 84 19; 12 rue Franklin Roosevelt; ☉10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon) The original Allied battle maps are still affixed to the walls of US General Dwight D Eisenhower's headquarters, where Nazi Germany, represented by General Alfred Jodl, surrendered unconditionally at 2.41am on 7 May 1945. Displays include military uniforms and photographs. A 12-minute film is screened in French, English and German.



## REIMS DISCOUNTS

The great-value **Discovery Pass** (adult/student €3/free) gets you into Reims' three municipal museums – Musée des Beaux-Arts, Musée St-Rémi and Musée de la Reddition – and Chapelle Fougita. It's sold wherever it's valid.

The **Reims City Card** (€15), available at the tourist office, entitles you to the Champagne house tour of your choice, an audioguide tour of the cathedral and all the benefits of a Discovery Pass.



## Roman Reims

### ROMAN SITES

For a quick trip back to Roman Gaul, check out the massive **Porte de Mars** (Mars Gate; place de la République), a three-arched triumphal gate built in the 2nd century AD, and the below-street-level **Cryptoportique** (place du Forum; admission free; ☎interior 2-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-mid-Oct), thought to have been used for grain storage in the 3rd century AD. Cultural events are held in the adjacent **amphitheatre** (place du Forum), inaugurated in 2010.

## Art Deco Reims

### ARCHITECTURE

The vaulted **Halles du Boulingrin** (rue de Mars) were a symbol of Reims' emergence

from the destruction of WWI when they began service as the city's main food market in 1929. Closed in 1988, they will again shelter food stalls – as well as art expositions (on the mezzanine) and cultural events – starting on Valentine's Day 2012. The peculiar name is derived from the English 'bowl-ing green' (as in lawn bowling).

Thanks to a donation from the US-based Carnegie Foundation, the lobby of the **Bibliothèque** (library; 2 place Carnegie) boasts gorgeous 1920s mosaics, stained glass, frescos and an extraordinary chandelier – duck inside for a look!

## Reims

### 📍 Top Sight

Cathédrale Notre Dame .....	C5
Palais du Tau .....	C5

### 📍 Sights

Amphitheatre .....	(see 3)
1 Bibliothèque .....	C5
2 Chapelle Foujita .....	D1
3 Cryptoportique .....	C3
4 Église St-Jacques .....	B5
5 Galerie d'Erlon .....	B4
6 Halles du Boulingrin .....	C2
7 Joan of Arc Statue .....	C5
8 Musée de la Reddition .....	A1
9 Musée des Beaux-Arts .....	B5
10 Musée Hôtel Le Vergeur .....	C3
11 Porte de Mars .....	B2
12 Subé Fountain .....	A4

### Activities, Courses & Tours

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### 🛏 Sleeping

14 Grand Hôtel des Templiers .....	D3
15 Hôtel Cecyl .....	A4

16 Hôtel de la Cathédrale .....	B5
17 Hôtel de la Paix .....	A4
18 Latino Hôtel .....	A4

### 🍷 Eating

19 Brasserie Le Boulingrin .....	C2
20 Côte Cuisine .....	A3
21 La Cave aux Fromages .....	C4
22 Le Bocal .....	B2
23 Le Foch .....	B3
24 Marché du Boulingrin .....	C2
25 Monoprix Supermarket .....	A4

### ☕ Drinking

26 Café du Palais .....	B4
27 Hall Place .....	B2
28 Waïda .....	B4

### 🎭 Entertainment

Billetterie Fnac .....	(see 25)
29 Cinéma Opéra .....	B5

### 🛒 Shopping

Alice Délice .....	(see 25)
30 Vins CPH .....	C3

The tourist office also has a brochure on art deco sites in Reims.

### Chapelle Foujita

CHAPEL

(Chapelle Notre-Dame de la Paix; 33 rue du Champ de Mars; ☎2-6pm May-Oct, closed Wed) The last great work by the Japanese-born artist Tsuguharu (Léonard) Foujita (1886–1968). Inaugurated in 1966.

### 👉 Tours

The musty *caves* (cellars) and dusty bottles of eight Reims-area Champagne houses (known as *maisons* – literally, ‘houses’) can be visited on guided tours. The following places both have fancy websites, cellar temperatures of 10°C to 12°C (bring warm clothes!) and frequent English-language tours that end, *naturellement*, with a tasting session. For details on how Champagne is made, see p932.

### Mumm

CHAMPAGNE CELLAR

(☎03 26 49 59 70; www.mumm.com; 34 rue du Champ de Mars; tours €10; ☎tours begin 9am–11am & 2–5pm daily Mar-Oct & Sat Nov-Feb) Mumm (pronounced ‘moom’), the only *maison* in central Reims, was founded in 1827 and is now the world’s third-largest producer (almost eight million

bottles a year). Engaging and edifying one-hour tours take you through cellars filled with 25 million bottles of fine bubbly. Tours that include tutored tastings of special vintages cost €15 to €20. Wheelchair accessible. Phone ahead if possible.

### Taittinger

CHAMPAGNE CELLAR

(☎03 26 85 84 33; www.taittinger.com; 9 place St-Nicaise; tours €10; ☎tours begin 9.30–11.50am & 2pm–4.20pm, closed Sat & Sun mid-Nov–mid-Mar) The headquarters of Taittinger is an excellent place to come for a clear, straightforward presentation on how Champagne is actually made – there’s no claptrap about ‘the Champagne mystique’ here. Parts of the cellars occupy 4th-century Roman stone quarries; other bits were excavated by 13th-century Benedictine monks. No need to reserve. Situated 1.5km south-east of Reims centre; take the Citadine 1 or 2 bus to the St-Nicaise or Salines stops.

### 🛏 Sleeping

A number of midrange hotels can be found just west of place Drouet d’Erlon along rue



Buïrette. The tourist office (by phone or in person) and its website can help with hotel reservations (no charge).



### Grand Hôtel des Templiers

HOTEL €€€

(03 26 88 55 08; www.grandhoteldestempliers-reims.com; 22 rue des Templiers; r €190-280, ste €350; ④⑤⑥⑦) Built in the 1800s as the home of a rich Champagne merchant, this neo-Gothic extravaganza retains its original ceilings, stained glass and furnishings. The imposing wooden staircase gives a certain retro theatricality, but the 18 rooms and suites come with modern marble bathrooms. Bonuses include a basement swimming pool, sauna, *hammam* (Turkish bath) and flowery breakfast room. Wheelchair access available. Situated in a quiet neighbourhood 500m east of the centre.

### Hôtel de la Paix

HOTEL €€

(03 26 40 04 08; www.bestwestern-lapaix-reims.com; 9 rue Buïrette; d €155-205; ④⑤⑥⑦) An island of serenity just steps from hopping place Drouet d'Erlon, this modern, Best Western-affiliated hostelry has 169 classy, comfortable rooms; upgrade to 'De-luxe' for lots more space. To mellow out, you can head to the pool, jacuzzi, *hammam* and fitness room – or the calming Japanese garden in the courtyard.

### Hôtel de la Cathédrale

HOTEL €

(03 26 47 28 46; www.hotel-cathedrale-reims.fr; 20 rue Libergier; s/d/q from €56/59/79; ④) Graciousness and a resident Yorkshire terrier greet guests at this hostelry, run by a music-loving couple (she used to teach piano, he ran a music school). The 17 tasteful rooms, spread over four floors (no lift, though), are smallish but pleasingly chintzy, and all have recently been renovated. Corner rooms 14, 23 and 33 are especially bright; room 43 has views of Basilique St-Rémi and the hills to the south.

### Latino Hôtel

HOTEL €

(03 26 47 48 89; www.latinocafe.fr, in French; 33 place Drouet d'Erlon; d €58-79, ste €130; ④⑤⑥⑦) Above a buzzy café with a Latin beat, this almost boutique hotel has a dozen gaily (think fruity) painted guestrooms (cherry, pumpkin and aubergine) over five floors, but no lift. The furnishings are fun, the welcome warm and we love the quotes from the great and the good (Gandhi, Oscar Wilde) sgraffitoed on the hall walls.

### Hôtel Cecyl

HOTEL €

(03 26 47 57 47; www.hotel-cecyl.fr; 24 rue Buïrette; s/d/tr €45/57/77; ④) Solid budget value behind a century-old facade. The 27 rooms come with faux parquet floor, flat-screen TV and yellow and orange tones so bright they'll almost give you a tan. Ask for rooms 202, 302 and 402, whose alcoves afford views of place Drouet d'Erlon's Subé Fountain.

### Centre International de Séjour

HOSTEL €

(CIS; 03 26 40 52 60; www.cis-reims.com; chaussée Bocquaine; bed in s/d/q per person €43/26/20, with shared toilet €33/20/20; ④24hr; ④) The 85 rooms are institutional and charmless (think showers with timer buttons) but the price is right – and you can cook in the small kitchen and there's a washing machine in the basement. Camping cars can park in the lot out back for up to 48 hours. Situated about 1km southwest of the centre and 200m south of the Comédie tram stop.



### Eating

Place Drouet d'Erlon is lined with inexpensive restaurants and pub-café (including two that are Irish-style) but, as one local matron put it with arched eyebrows, its eateries are *populaire, ordinaire* and *touristique*. More discerning diners often head to the stretch of rue de Mars facing Halles du Boulingrin and adjacent rue du Temple, and to the restaurants and cafés along the southern side of place du Forum, some of which have seating on the square.



### Le Foch

MODERN FRENCH €€

(03 26 47 48 22; www.lefoch.com; 37 bd Foch; menus €31-80; ④closed Mon, lunch Sat & dinner Sun) Described as 'one of France's best fish restaurants' by the food critic Michael Edwards, elegant Le Foch – holder of one Michelin star – serves up cuisine that's as beautiful as it is delicious.

### Brasserie Le Boulingrin

BRASSERIE €€

(03 26 40 96 22; www.boulingrin.fr; 48 rue de Mars; menus €18-28; ④Mon-Sat) A genuine, old-time brasserie – the decor and zinc bar date back to 1925 – whose ambience and cuisine make it an enduring favourite. From September to June, the culinary focus is on *fruits de mer* (seafood).

### Le Bocal

SEAFOOD €

(03 26 47 02 51; 27 rue de Mars; mains €13-19; ④closed Sun, Mon & dinner Wed) Tastefully decorated in the colours of the North Atlantic, this unpretentious fish and seafood restaurant has just five tables and two hot *plats*

*du jour* (dishes of the day). Enter through the fish shop, where odours of the sea will engulf your senses. Three hot oysters cost €6 and a glass of Champagne is €8.

**Côté Cuisine** TRADITIONAL FRENCH €  
(☎03 26 83 93 68; 43 bd Foch; mains €11.80-22.50, weekday lunch menus €12-15.50, dinner menus €32.50; ☺closed dinner Sun) A spacious, semiformal place with white tablecloths, modern chandeliers and well-regarded traditional French cuisine. Especially good value at lunchtime.

### Self-Catering

Great spots for a picnic include the gardens behind the cathedral and flowery Square Colbert, just southeast of the train station.

**Marché du Boulingrin** FOOD MARKET €  
(place du Boulingrin; ☺8am-1pm Sat) Under a tent but will move back inside the historic Halles du Boulingrin in 2012.

**La Cave aux Fromages** CHEESE €  
(12 place du Forum; ☺8am-1pm & 3.30-7.45pm Tue-Sat)

**Monoprix** SUPERMARKET €  
(51 place Drouet d'Erlon) Walk to the back of the Espace d'Erlon shopping mall (Galerie de la Fnac) and take the down escalator.



### Drinking

While the focal point of Reims' nightlife is place Drouet d'Erlon, whose perimeter is lined with midrange cafés and pubs, many of the city's more stylish nightspots are elsewhere in town.



### Café du Palais

CAFÉ  
(www.cafedupalais.fr; 14 place Myron-Herrick; ☺10am-8.30pm, to midnight or 1am Fri & Sat, closed Sun) Run by the same family since 1930, this old-time café is the place to see and be seen, at least if you're a *bon bourgeois* or a theatre type. Decoration includes wall mirrors, an art deco skylight and an extraordinary collection of bric-a-brac that ranges from the tacky to the inspired. The shoes hanging upside down from the dark red ceiling and the life-sized statue of a naked woman with horse's hoofs and elephant tusks – is it art? Is it kitsch?

### Hall Place

CHAMPAGNE BAR  
(☎03 26 46 10 00; www.hallplace.fr; 23bis rue de Mars; wine per glass €4.50-9; ☺10am-3pm & 6pm-midnight Tue-Fri, 10am-3pm Mon & Sat, closed Sun) Relax, sip bubbly and look fabulous at this trendy wine bar, a huge hit with Reims' young and beautiful set. Streetside,

chest-high butcher-block tables look out on the curves of Halles du Boulingrin, while at the back there's a wine shop. Lunch is served daily except Sunday; dinner is available on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday (€10.50 to €23).

### Waïda

TEAROOM  
(5 place Drouet d'Erlon; ☺7.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) A *salon de thé* (tearoom) and confectioner with old-fashioned mirrors, mosaics and marble. A good place to pick up a box of *biscuits roses* (€3.90), traditionally nibbled with Champagne (€6 to €7.50 a glass). The *religieuses* (cream-filled puff pastries; €2.75) are divine!



### Entertainment

**Billetterie Fnac** BOX OFFICE  
(www.fnactickets.com; 51 place Drouet d'Erlon; ☺10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) Sells concert and cultural event tickets inside the Espace d'Erlon shopping centre (Galerie de la Fnac), on the lower level (down the escalator).

**Cinéma Opéra** CINEMA  
(☎03 26 47 13 54; www.allocine.fr, in French; 3 rue Théodore Dubois) Screens nondubbed films, some in English.



### Shopping

Stylish boutiques line rue de Talleyrand.



### Vins CPH

WINE  
(www.vinscp.com; 3 place Léon Bourgeois) Shop for wines the way savvy locals do. At the end of the courtyard, head down into the cellar for a huge selection (some 1100 vintages are on offer), including over 200 Champagnes (€14 to €900 – the priciest bottle is a Krug).

### Alice Délice

KITCHENWARE  
(www.alicedelice.com, in French; 53 place Drouet d'Erlon) For a fine selection of kitchen implements and gadgets.



### Information

Commercial banks can be found on rue Carnot and at the southern end of place Drouet d'Erlon.

**Cyber@Games** (52 place Drouet d'Erlon; per hr €4.20; ☺10am-7pm Mon-Sat) Internet access inside Galerie du Lion d'Or.

**Post office** (2 rue Cérés) Also exchanges currency.

**Tourist office** (☎08 92 70 13 51, per minute €0.34; www.reims-tourisme.com; 2 rue Guillaume de Machault; ☺9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun & holidays)



## **i** Getting There & Away

**BUS** The best way to get to Troyes (€24, 1½ to 2¼ hours, three to five daily on weekdays, two on Saturday, three on Sunday except school holidays) is to take a bus operated by **TransChampagneArdenne** (☎03 26 65 17 07; [www.sdmarne.fr](http://www.sdmarne.fr), in French). The stop is out the train station's northern (back) entrance; hours are posted.

**CAR** Rental agencies:

**ADA** (☎03 26 82 57 81; [www.ada.fr](http://www.ada.fr); train station car park)

**Avis** (☎03 26 47 10 08; train station car park)

**Hertz** (☎03 26 47 98 78; 26 bd Joffre)

**Rent a Car Système** (☎03 26 77 87 77; [www.rentacar.fr](http://www.rentacar.fr); train station car park)

**TRAIN** Reims train station, 1km northwest of the cathedral, was renovated in 2010; the bullet marks on the facade date from both world wars. Half the trains to Paris Gare de l'Est (12 to 17 daily) are TGVs (€32 to €41, 45 minutes); the rest are TERs (€24, 1¼ hours). Direct services also go to Épernay (€6, 20 to 36 minutes, 18 daily weekdays, seven to 11 daily weekends), Laon (€9, 35 to 50 minutes, nine daily Monday to Friday, five on Saturday, three on Sunday) and Charles de Gaulle airport (three times a day).

In the city centre, train information and tickets are available at the **Boutique SNCF** (1 cours Jean-Baptiste Langlet; ☎9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat).

## **i** Getting Around

**BICYCLE ADA** (☎03 26 82 57 81; train station parking lot) Rents out bicycles (from €17) and electric bicycles (€24 a day).

**BUS & TRAM** Starting in April 2011, Reims' first tram line will link the city centre (rue de Vesle and cours JB Langlet) and the train station with Gare de Champagne-Ardenne TGV, on the Paris-Strasbourg TGV Est Européen line.

Two circular bus lines, the clockwise Citadine 1 and the anticlockwise Citadine 2 (single ticket €1, all-day *ticket journée* €3), operated by **TUR** (☎03 26 88 25 38; [www.tur.fr](http://www.tur.fr), in French; 6 rue Chanzy; ☎7.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat), serve most of the major sights of Reims. Most TUR lines begin their last runs at about 9.50pm; five night lines operate until 12.15am.

**TAXI** Call ☎03 26 47 05 05.

## Champagne Routes of the Marne

The Champagne Routes (Routes Touristiques du Champagne; [www.tourisme-en-champagne.com](http://www.tourisme-en-champagne.com)) of the Marne *département* wend their way among neat rows of

hillside vines, through hilltop forests and across lowland crop fields. Along the way, they call on winemaking villages and hamlets, some with notable churches or speciality museums, others quite ordinary, most without a centre or even a café. At almost every turn (and there are many), beautiful panoramas unfold and small-scale, family-run Champagne wineries welcome travellers in search of bubbly.

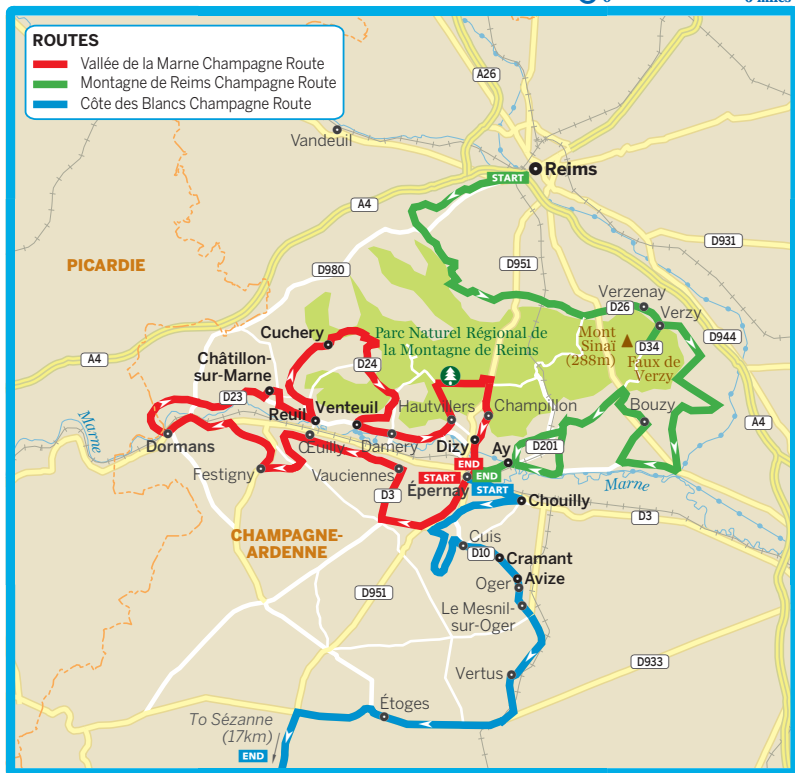
Area tourist offices (eg in Reims, Épernay, Hautvillers and Châtillon-sur-Marne) can supply you with details on B&Bs and on the opening times (and English capabilities) of various Champagne producers – but bear in mind that their map-brochures are far from exhaustive (producers have to pay to be included). Many producers prefer that visitors phone ahead but, if you haven't, don't be shy about knocking on the door. Almost all producers are closed around the *vendange* (grape harvest, ie from very late August into October), when bringing in the crop (picked completely by hand – mechanical harvesters are forbidden here) eclipses all other activities. More and more young *vignerons* (winegrowers) speak English.

The Champagne Routes of the Marne map (p287) shows three serpentine itineraries – Montagne de Reims, Vallée de la Marne and Côte des Blancs. The routes are not designed to be driven in their entirety in a single day so pick and choose segments that suite your mood; we've covered just a few of the villages and highlights you'll find along the way.

The Champagne Routes, which follow secondary and tertiary rural roads, are signposted but there are so many twists and turn-offs that setting off without a map would be as unwise as, well, praising the effervescent liquid marketed – fraudulently and outrageously, as far as locals are concerned – under the name 'California Champagne'. Bookshops and tourist offices sell Michelin's yellow-jacketed, 1:150,000-scale *Aisne, Ardennes, Marne* map (No 306; €4.50).

## MONTAGNE DE REIMS CHAMPAGNE ROUTE

Linking Reims with Épernay by skirting the Parc Naturel Régional de la Montagne de Reims, a regional park covering the forested Reims Mountain plateau, this meandering, 70km route passes through vineyards planted mainly with pinot noir



vines. Villages are listed in the order you'll encounter them if starting out from Reims.

**VERZENAY**

For the region's best introduction to the art of growing grapes and the cycles of the seasons, head to the **Phare de Verzenay** (Verzenay Lighthouse; ☎03 26 07 87 87; [www.lepharedeverzenay.com](http://www.lepharedeverzenay.com), in French; D26; adult incl audioguide €7; 🕒10am-6pm Tue-Fri, to 6.30pm Sat & Sun, last entry 1hr earlier, closed Jan-Mar), on a hilltop at the eastern edge of the village. Exactly 101 spiral stairs lead to the top of the lighthouse, constructed as a publicity stunt in 1909, which rewards visitors with unsurpassed 360-degree views of vine, field and forest – and, if you're lucky, a tiny TGV zipping by in the distance. The Sillery sugar mill, visible on the horizon, turns an astounding 16,000 tonnes of beets (a major regional crop) into 2600 tonnes of sugar each day! Stop by the **Jardin Panoramique** (admission free) to get a look at the four au-

thorised techniques for tying grape vines to horizontal wires (can you make out the differences?). The ticket counter can provide an English translation of the wall texts.

The **Moulin de Verzenay** (Verzenay Windmill; D26), on the western edge of town, was used as an observation post during WWI and by the US Army during WWII. The interior is closed but the nearby hill offers fine valley views.

## PARC NATURAL RÉGIONAL DE LA MONTAGNE DE REIMS

The 500 sq km Montagne de Reims Regional Park is best known for a botanical curiosity, 800 mutant beech trees known as **faux de Verzy** (see <http://verzy.verzenay.online.fr> for photos). To get a good look at the trees, which have tortuously twisted trunks and branches that hang down like an umbrella, take the Balade des Faux **forest walk** from 'Les Faux' parking lot, 2km up D34 from Verzy (situated on D26).

Across D34, a 500m gravel path leads through the forest to a *point de vue* (panoramic viewpoint) – next to a concrete WWI bunker – atop 288m-high **Mont Sinaï**.

### VALLÉE DE LA MARNE CHAMPAGNE ROUTE

A stronghold of pinot meunier vines, this 90km itinerary winds from Épernay to Dormans, heading more or less west along the hillsides north of the River Marne; it then circles back to the east along the river's south bank. The GR14 long-distance walking trail and its variants (eg GR141) pass through the area.

#### HAUTVILLERS

It was in this tidy village (population 800), alive with forsythia and tulips in spring, that Dom Pierre Pérignon (1639–1715) is popularly believed to have created Champagne. The good Dom's tomb is in front of the altar of the **Église Abbatiale** (abbey church; ☺daily), adorned with 17th-century woodwork.

Hautvillers is known for its medieval-style **wrought-iron signs**, which provide pictorial clues to the activities taking place on the other side of the wall.

The attractive main square, place de la République, is where you'll find the **Café d'Hautvillers** (☺9am–9pm, closed Tue), which serves drinks and French dishes on a sunny terrace. You'll also find the **tourist office** (☎03 26 57 06 35; www.tourisme-hautvillers.com; ☹9.30am–1pm & 1.30–6pm Mon–Sat, 10am–5pm Sun Apr–mid-Oct, 10am–noon & 2–5pm Mon–Sat mid-Oct–Mar), where you can pick up excellent free maps for several gorgeous vineyard walks. One-hour guided tours cost €3 (with a Champagne tasting €5).

Astonishing **vineyard views** await a few hundred metres north of the centre along route de Fismes (D386); south along route de Cumières (a road leading to D1); and along the GR14 long-distance walking trail (indicated by red-and-white trail markings) and local vineyard footpaths (yellow markings).

Hautvillers is twinned with the Alsatian town of Eguisheim, which helps explain why two storks (see p321) – Petrus and Leontine (they're named after Dom 'Petrus' Pérignon and Eguisheim-born Pope Leo IX) – live in the **Voilière des Cigognes Altavilloises** (☎03 26 59 44 58; D386; admission free), an easy 500m walk towards Épernay from place de la République. If

you're not expecting a baby, this may be your only chance to get a close-up view of these majestic birds, each covered by about 15,000 feathers (some day, this fact may prove useful at a cocktail party). In most years, storklings hatch here in May. Inside the shed, hand-made **dioramas** illustrate the manifold threats faced by migrating storks.

Hautvillers is 7km north of Épernay.

#### CUCHERY

You're assured a warm – and English-speaking – welcome and a fascinating cellar tour at **Albert Levasseur** (☎03 26 58 11 38; www.champagne-levasseur.fr; 6 rue Sorbier, Cuchery), run by a friendly Franco-Irish couple, which turns grapes grown on 4.2 hectares into 35,000 to 40,000 bottles of Champagne each year. Try to phone or email ahead if possible – but if not just drop by and knock. Situated in the hamlet of Cuchery (population 390), 20km northwest of Épernay on D24.

#### CHÂTILLON-SUR-MARNE

The highest point in this sloping village (population 840) is crowned by a 25m-high **statue of Pope Urban II** (Urbain II; dedicated in 1887), a particularly successful local boy (1042–99) best known to history for having launched the bloody First Crusade. The orientation table near the base offers excellent views of the Marne Valley and is a super spot for a picnic.

The **tourist office** (☎03 26 58 32 86; www.otchatillon51.com, in French; ☺closed morning Mon, Jan & Feb) is very near the partly Romanesque **church**. A map panel right next to the post office details an 11km, four-hour **vineyard walk**.

Châtillon is 20km west of Épernay, on D23.

#### ŒUILLY

To get a sense of winegrowing life a century ago, drop by the **Écomusée d'Œuilly** (☎03 26 57 10 30; adult €6.50; ☺10am–noon & 2–5pm, to 6pm Apr–Oct, closed Sun morning & Tue, closed Mon Nov–Mar), whose three sections include a schoolroom, c 1900. Behind massively built **Église St-Memmie** (13th century), the churchyard – with panoramic views – is the final resting place of five members of a RAF air crew downed in 1944; each grave bears a moving personal inscription.

Œuilly (population 650) is 15km west of Épernay, just off D3.

## CÔTE DES BLANCS CHAMPAGNE ROUTE

This 100km route, planted almost exclusively with white chardonnay grapes (the name means 'hillside of the whites'), begins along Épernay's majestic av du Champagne and then heads south to Sézanne and beyond.

Blanc des Blancs (Champagne made exclusively with chardonnay grapes) is known for its freshness, elegance, clarity, very small bubbles and a bouquet reminiscent of 'yellow fruits' such as pear and plum.

### CRAMANT

To appreciate the austere beauty of the Champagne countryside, check out the view from the ridge above this village (population 900), whose northern entrance is adorned by a two-storey-high champagne bottle. Situated on D10 7.5km southeast of Épernay on D10.

### AVIZE

Many past, present and future Champagne makers learned, or are learning, their art and science at the **Lycée Viticole de la Champagne** (Champagne High School of Wine-making; [www.les-enfants-de-la-viti.com](http://www.les-enfants-de-la-viti.com), in French), run by the Ministry of Agriculture. As part of their studies, students produce quite excellent bubbly, made with grapes from some of Champagne's most prestigious parcels and sold under the label Champagne Sanger ([www.sanger.fr](http://www.sanger.fr)). Sanger was established shortly after WWI, which is why the name is pronounced *sans guerre* ('without war'), ie sahn-GHER.

At the **Sanger Cellars** (☎03 26 57 79 79; 33 rue du Rempart du Midi; ☼8am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, closed 1st half Aug), free tours of the high school's impressive production facilities take in both traditional equipment and the latest high-tech machinery, such as a Rube Goldberg gadget that removes sediment from the necks of bottles after *remuage* (riddling) by an automated *gyropal-ette*. Champagnes are sold at the discounted *prix départ cave* (cellar-door price); profits are reinvested in the school. The entrance is on D19 100m down the hill from D10; if the door is locked, push the intercom button.

Once the abbey church of a Benedictine convent, **Église St-Nicolas**, on rue de l'Église (D10), mixes Romanesque, Flamboyant Gothic and Renaissance styles. From there, aptly named rue de la Montagne leads up the hill (towards Grauves) – past another oversized Champagne bottle – to

**Parc Vix** (D19), which affords panoramic vineyard views; a map sign details a 6.5km, two-hour walk through forest and field.

### OGER

Oger (population 600) is known for its grand cru fields, prize-winning flower gardens and the **Musée du Mariage** (Wedding Museum; ☎03 26 57 50 89; [www.mariage-et-champagne.com](http://www.mariage-et-champagne.com); 1 rue d'Avize/D10; adult €6; ☼10am-noon & 2-6pm, closed Mon). Featuring colourful and often gaudy objects associated with 19th-century marriage traditions, highlights include a tableau of newlyweds in their nuptial bed – but they're not alone, for they've been woken up early by family and friends bearing Champagne, chocolate and broad smiles. The collection was assembled by the parents of the owner of Champagne Henry de Vaugency (founded 1732), an eighth-generation Champagne grower. An explanatory sheet in English is available.

### LE MESNIL-SUR-OGER

**TOP CHOICE** **Musé de la Vigne et du Vin** (Vine & Wine Museum; ☎03 26 57 50 15; [www.champagne-launois.fr](http://www.champagne-launois.fr), in French; 2 av Eugène Guillaume, cnr D10; adult incl 3 flutes Champagne €7.50) is so outstanding that it's worth planning your day around a tour – on most days, one begins at 10am. Assembled by a family that has been making Champagne since 1872, this extraordinary collection of century-old Champagne-making equipment includes objects so aesthetically ravishing that you'll want to reach out and touch them. Among the highlights is a massive 16-tonne oak-beam grape press from 1630. Reservations can be made by phone or through their website; tours are not necessarily in English.

Wine and restaurant critic Michael Edwards calls Le Mesnil 'the greatest Chardonnay commune in Champagne'.

For an excellent French meal, head to **Le Mesnil** (☎03 26 57 95 57; [www.restaurantle-mesnil.com](http://www.restaurantle-mesnil.com), in French; 2 rue Pasteur; menus €29-39; ☼closed Sun, Mon & dinner Tue).

## Épernay

POP 25,225

Prosperous Épernay, the self-proclaimed *capitale du champagne* and home to many of the world's most celebrated Champagne houses, is the best place in Champagne for touring cellars and sampling bubbly. The town also makes an excellent base for exploring the Champagne Routes.



Beneath the streets in 110km of subterranean cellars, more than 200 million bottles of Champagne, just waiting to be popped open on some sparkling occasion, are being aged. In 1950 one such cellar – owned by the irrepressible Mercier family – hosted a car rally without the loss of a single bottle!

Épernay is 25km south of Reims and can be visited by train or car as a day trip from Reims.



### Sights & Activities

Many of Épernay's *maisons de champagne* (Champagne houses) are based along the

handsome – and eminently strollable – av de Champagne, lined with elegant town houses that were rebuilt after the devastation of WWI. It stretches eastward from the town's commercial heart, whose liveliest streets are rue Général Leclerc and rue St-Thibault.

### Moët & Chandon

CHAMPAGNE HOUSE

(☎03 26 51 20 20; [www.moet.com](http://www.moet.com); 20 av de Champagne; adult incl 1/2 glasses €14.50/22, 10-18yr €9; 🕒tours 9.30am-noon & 2-4.30pm, closed Sat & Sun mid-Nov-mid-Mar, also closed Jan) This prestigious *maison* offers frequent one-hour tours that are among the region's

## Épernay

### Sights

- 1 Hôtel de Ville ..... D3
- 2 Moët & Chandon ..... D3
- 3 Théâtre Gabrielle Dorziat ..... D2

### Sleeping

- 4 Hôtel de la Cloche ..... C2
- 5 Hôtel Les Berceaux ..... B4

### Eating

- Bistrot Le 7 ..... (see 5)
- 6 Charcutier-Traiteur ..... A3
- 7 Covered Market ..... A5
- 8 La Cave à Champagne ..... C2
- 9 La Cloche à Fromage ..... A4
- 10 La Table Kobus ..... C1
- 11 Le Sardaigne ..... C2
- 12 Marché Plus ..... A3
- 13 Open-Air Market ..... B2
- 14 Restaurant Le Théâtre ..... D2

### Entertainment

- 15 Cinéma Le Palace ..... C1

most impressive. At the shop you can pick up a jeroboam (3L bottle) of superpremium Dom Pérignon *millésime* (vintage Champagne) of 1998 for just €2100.

### Mercier

CHAMPAGNE HOUSE

(☎03 26 51 22 22; [www.champagnemercier.fr](http://www.champagnemercier.fr); 68-70 av de Champagne; adult incl 1/3 glasses €9/17, 12-17yr €5; ☎tours 9.30-11.30am & 2-4.30pm, closed mid-Dec-mid-Feb) France's most popular brand has thrived on unabashed self-promotion since it was founded in 1847 by Eugène Mercier, a trailblazer in the field of eye-catching publicity stunts and the virtual creator of the cellar tour. Everything here is flashy, including the 160,000L barrel that took two decades to build (for the Universal Exposition of 1889), the lift that transports you 30m underground and the laser-guided touring train.

### De Castellane

CHAMPAGNE HOUSE

(☎03 26 51 19 11; [www.castellane.com](http://www.castellane.com), in French; 64 av de Champagne; adult incl 1 glass €8.50, under 12yr free; ☎tours 10-11am & 2-5pm, closed Christmas-mid-Mar) The 45-minute tours, in French and English, take in an informative bubbly museum dedicated to elucidating the *méthode champenoise* and its diverse technologies. The reward for climbing the 237 steps up the 66m-high tower (built 1905) is a fine panoramic view.

## Hôtel de Ville

CITY HALL

(City Hall; 7bis av de Champagne; ☎8.30am-noon & 1.30-6pm Mon-Fri) Next to the tourist office, in the neoclassical Hôtel de Ville, you can take a peek at the ornate, Louis XV-style **Salle de Conseil** (city council room) and **Salle de Mariages** (marriage hall). The adjacent, flowery park is perfect for a picnic.

### Théâtre Gabrielle Dorziat

HISTORIC BUILDING

([www.lesalmanazar.fr](http://www.lesalmanazar.fr), in French; place Mendès-France) The north side of Théâtre Gabrielle Dorziat, built in 1902, still shows shell and bullet marks from WWII.

## Tours

### Champagne Houses

CELLAR TOUR

Several *maisons* offer informative and engaging cellar tours, followed by a *dégustation* (tasting) and a visit to the factory-outlet shop. See the individual Champagne houses on p290.

### Champagne Domi Moreau

VINEYARD TOUR

(☎06 30 35 51 07, after 7pm ☎03 26 59 45 85; [www.champagne-domimoreau.com](http://www.champagne-domimoreau.com); tours €20; ☎tours 9.30am & 2.30pm except Wed, no tours Christmas & Feb school holidays & 2nd half of Aug) This company runs three-hour minibus tours, in French and English, of nearby vineyards. Pick-up is across the street from the tourist office. They also organise two-hour vineyard tours by bicycle (€10) from Nancy. Call ahead for reservations.

## Sleeping

Épernay's hotels fill up fast on weekends from Easter to September and on weekdays, too, in May, June and September.

### Le Clos Raymi

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎03 26 51 00 58; [www.closraymi-hotel.com](http://www.closraymi-hotel.com), in French; 3 rue Joseph de Venoge; d from €100, ste €160; ☎) Staying at this atmospheric place is like being a personal guest of Monsieur Chandon of Champagne fame, who occupied this luxurious town house over a century ago. The seven romantic rooms – styles include Provençal, Tuscan and colonial – have giant beds, high ceilings, French windows and parquet floors. In winter there's often a fire in the cosy art deco living room. Perfect for a honeymoon.

### La Villa St-Pierre

HOTEL €

(☎03 26 54 40 80; [www.villasaintpierre.fr](http://www.villasaintpierre.fr); 14 av Paul Chandon; d €45-50; ☎) In an early-20th-century mansion, this homey place, with 11



## MORE BUBBLY FOR EVERYONE

Unlike Cognac, 96% of which is consumed outside France, some 62% of the 400 million bottles of Champagne produced each year are popped open, sipped and savoured in France itself. That doesn't leave much for the rest of us, especially when you consider how many bottles are wasted naming ships and showering victorious football players. But help is at hand. Faced with rising worldwide demand, the government body that regulates where Champagne can be grown has proposed expanding the area – currently 327 sq km – for the first time since 1927. Starting in about 2017, 40 very lucky villages are likely to start planting their very first official Champagne vines. Not surprisingly, the exact delineation of the new vineyards has been hugely controversial, not least because the value of land declared Champagne-worthy will rise by up to 30,000%, to about €1 million per hectare!

Large *maisons* (Champagne houses) with global brand recognition, many of them owned by international luxury-goods conglomerates, send a high percentage of their production to other countries (Moët & Chandon, for example, exports 80% of its bubbly), in part because profit margins are higher. But the region's 4800 small producers (known as *récoltants-manipulants* because they both harvest the grapes and 'manipulate' or 'elaborate' the juice into wine) continue to serve an almost exclusively domestic clientele. About 112 million bottles of Champagne left France in 2009, a drop of 26% compared to 2007 (apparently even Champagne drinkers have been hit by the global recession).

simple rooms, retains some of the charm of yesteryear.

### Hôtel de la Cloche

HOTEL €

(☎03 26 55 15 15; [www.hotel-la-cloche.com](http://www.hotel-la-cloche.com); 5 place Mendès-France; d €49-63, tr €59-69; 🍷🍴) A slightly stiff hotel with 19 rooms decorated in bright, dissonant colours. The 3rd-floor triples, with pitched ceilings, are ideal for kids – but, lest guests be disappointed, they won't rent them out unless you see them first. Some rooms have park or church views. This is a convenient hotel if you're arriving by rail.

### Hôtel Les Berceaux

HOTEL €€

(☎03 26 55 28 84; [www.lesberceaux.com](http://www.lesberceaux.com); 13 rue des Berceaux; d €95-115; 🍷) Founded in 1889, this institution has 28 comfortable, sound-proofed rooms with lots of dark-wood veneer and all-tile bathrooms.



### Eating

Épernay's main dining area is along rue Gambetta, whose establishments include three pizzerias and a kebab joint, and around adjacent place de la République.

### Restaurant Le Théâtre

TRADITIONAL FRENCH €€

(☎03 26 58 88 19; [www.epernay-rest-letheatre.com](http://www.epernay-rest-letheatre.com), in French; 6 place Mendès-France; lunch menus €17-22, dinner menus €28-46; ☺closed Wed, dinner Tue & dinner Sun) Refined traditional cuisine is served in a classic corner dining room built a century ago as a brasse-

rie, with 4.2m ceilings and floor-to-ceiling windows. The menu changes every three weeks, depending to what's fresh in the markets.

### La Cave à Champagne

REGIONAL CUISINE €€

(☎03 26 55 50 70; [www.la-cave-a-champagne.com](http://www.la-cave-a-champagne.com), in French; 16 rue Gambetta; menus €17-32; ☺closed Wed & dinner Tue) 'The Champagne Cellar' is well regarded by locals for its *chamenoise* cuisine, served in a warm, traditional, bourgeois atmosphere. You can sample three different Champagnes for €21.

### Bistrot Le 7

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎03 26 55 28 84; 13 rue des Berceaux; menus €17-23) One of the restaurants at Hôtel Les Berceaux has earned a Michelin star; the other (this one) serves excellent French cuisine amid semiformal, Mediterranean-chic decor. The escargots in a basil, butter and cream sauce are superior, and the chocolate desserts are to die for.

### La Table Kobus

FRENCH €€

(☎03 26 51 53 53; [www.latablekobus.com](http://www.latablekobus.com), in French; 3 rue du Docteur Rousseau; menus €28-39; ☺closed Mon, dinner Sun & dinner Thu) French cuisine in versions traditional and creative, served amid fin-de-siècle Paris bistro decor.

### Le Sardaigne

PIZZERIA €

(1 place Mendès-France; pizzas €7-11) Best pizza in town.

## Self-catering

### Covered market

(Halle St-Thibault; rue Gallice; ☎7.30am-12.30pm Wed & Sat)

FOOD MARKET €

### Open-air market

(place Auban Moët; ☎Sun morning)

FOOD MARKET €

### Charcutier-Traiteur

(9 place Hugues Plomb; ☎8am-12.45pm & 3-7.30pm, closed Sun & Wed) Scrumptious prepared dishes.

GOURMET FOOD €

### La Cloche à Fromage

(19 rue St-Thibault; ☎8.30am-12.15pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sat) Has been selling cheeses at this location for over a century.

CHEESE SHOP €

### Marché Plus

(13 place Hugues Plomb; ☎7am-9pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun)

SMALL SUPERMARKET €



## Entertainment

**Cinéma Le Palace** (☎08 92 68 07 51; www.le-palace.fr, in French; 33 bd de la Motte) Screens nondubbed films, some in English.



## Information

**Cybermania** (11 place des Arcades; per hr €3; ☎10am-10pm Tue-Sat, 2-8pm Sun, 2-10pm Mon) Internet access.

**Post office** (place Hugues Plomb) Also exchanges foreign currency.

**Tourist office** (☎03 26 53 33 00; www.ot-epernay.fr; 7 av de Champagne; ☎9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun & holidays) Has excellent English brochures and maps on cellar visits, walking and cycling options and car touring, and rents out a GPS unit (€7 per day) with self-guided vineyard driving tours in French, English and Dutch.



## Getting There & Around

**BICYCLE** Bicycles can be rented at Épernay's municipal swimming pool, **Espace Aquatique Bulléo** (☎03 26 53 35 60; www.ccepc.fr, in French; Parc Roger Menu, rue Dom Pérignon; per half-day/day/week €10/15/70; ☎10am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5.30pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct), situated about 700m south of the covered market.

The tourist office sells cycling maps and map-cards (€0.50).

**CAR Europcar** (☎03 26 54 90 61; 20 rempart Perrier)

**TRAIN** The **train station** (place Mendès-France) has direct services to Reims (€6, 20 to 36 minutes, 18 daily weekdays, seven to 11 daily weekends) and Paris Gare de l'Est (€21, 1¼ hours, five to 10 daily).

## Troyes

POP 63,450

Troyes – like Reims, one of the historic capitals of Champagne – has a lively centre that's graced with one of France's finest ensembles of half-timbered houses and Gothic churches. Often overlooked, it's one of the best places in France to get a sense of what Europe looked like back when Molière was penning his finest plays and the *Three Musketeers* were swashbuckling. Several unique and very worthwhile museums are another lure.

Troyes does not have any Champagne cellars. However, you can shop till you drop in its scores of outlet stores stuffed with brand-name clothing and accessories, a legacy of the city's long-time role as France's knitwear capital.



## Sights

Grey panels posted around the old city provide historic background in French and English.

### 16th-Century Troyes

OLD CITY

Half-timbered houses – some with lurching walls and floors that aren't quite on-the-level – line many streets in the old city, rebuilt after a devastating fire in 1524. The best place for aimless ambling is the area bounded by (clockwise from the north) rue Général de Gaulle, the Hôtel de Ville, rue Général Saussier and rue de la Pierre; of special interest are (from southwest to northeast) **rue de Vauluisant**, **rue de la Trinité**, **rue Champeaux** and **rue Paillet de Montabert**.

Off rue Champeaux (between No 30 and 32), a stroll along tiny **ruelle des Chats** (Alley of the Cats), as dark and narrow as it was four centuries ago – the upper floors almost touch – is like stepping back into the Middle Ages. The stones along the base of the walls were designed to give pedestrians a place to stand when horses clattered by.



## TROYES DISCOUNTS

**Le Pass' Troyes** (€15), sold at the tourist offices, gets you free entry to seven museums, a two-flute Champagne-tasting session, an old city tour (with a guide or audioguide) and discounts at various factory outlet shops.



## Troyes

### 📍 Top Sight

Cathédrale St-Pierre et St-Paul .....	G1
Église Ste-Madeleine .....	C2
Maison de l'Outil et de la Pensée	
Ouvrière .....	D4
Musée d'Art Moderne .....	G1

### 📍 Sights

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One of the founders of the Canadian city of Montréal, Paul Chomeday de Maisonneuve (1612–76), once lived in the **Hôtel de Chaudron** (4 rue Chrestien de Troyes).

**Cathédrale St-Pierre et St-Paul** CATHEDRAL (place St-Pierre; ☀9am-noon & 2-7pm, closed Sun morning) Troyes' most important house of worship, 114m long, incorporates elements from every period of *champenois* Gothic architecture. The Flamboyant **west facade**, for instance, dates from the mid-1500s, while the choir and transepts are more than 250 years older. The interior is illuminated by a spectacular series of some 180 **stained-glass windows** (13th to 17th

centuries) that shine like jewels when it's sunny. Also of interest: a fantastical **baroque organ** (1730s) sporting musical putti (cherubs), and a tiny **treasury** (☀Jul & Aug) with enamels from the Meuse Valley. Back in 1429, Joan of Arc and Charles VII stopped off here on their way to his coronation in Reims.



### Maison de l'Outil et de la Pensée

TOOL MUSEUM

(Museum of Tools & Crafts; ☎03 25 73 28 26; www.maison-de-l-outil.com; 7 rue de la Trinité; adult/under 12yr €6.50/free; ☀10am-6pm, to 8pm Thu, closed Tue Oct-Mar) Worth to a sensuous lustre by generations of skilled hands, the 10,000 hand tools on display here – each designed to perform a single, specialised task with exquisite efficiency – bring to life a world of manual skills made obsolete by the Industrial Revolution. The collection is housed in the magnificent Renaissance-style Hôtel de Mauroy, built in 1556. Videos show how the tools were used and what they were used for. A catalogue in English is available at the reception.

### Musée d'Art Moderne

ART MUSEUM

(☎03 25 76 26 80; place St-Pierre; adult €5; ☀10am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun, until 7pm May-Sep) The highlights here are French painting (including lots of fauvist works) created between 1850 and 1950, glass (especially the work of local glass-maker and painter Maurice Marinot) and ceramics. Featured artists include Derain, Dufy, Matisse, Modigliani, Picasso and Sou-tine. Housed in a 16th- to 18th-century bishop's palace, this place owes its existence to all those crocodile-logo shirts, whose global success allowed Lacoste entrepreneurs Pierre and Denise Lévy to amass this outstanding collection.

### Église Ste-Madeleine

CHURCH

(rue Général de Gaulle; ☀2-4.30pm Tue-Sun, until 7pm May-Sep) Troyes' oldest and most interesting neighbourhood church has an early-Gothic nave and transept (early 13th century) and a Renaissance-style choir and tower. The highlights here are the splendid Flamboyant Gothic **rood screen** (early 1500s), dividing the transept from the choir, and the 16th-century **stained glass** in the presbytery portraying scenes from Genesis. In the nave, the statue of a deadly serious **Ste-Marthe** (St Martha), around the pillar from the wooden pulpit, is considered a masterpiece of the 15th-century Troyes School.

## Basilique St-Urbain

CHURCH

(place Vernier; ☉2-4.30pm Tue-Sun, until 7pm May-Sep) Begun in 1262 by the Troyes-born Pope Urban IV, whose father's shoemaker shop once stood on this spot, this church is exuberantly Gothic both inside and out, and has some fine 13th-century stained glass. In the chapel off the south transept arm is **La Vierge au Raisin** (Virgin with Grapes), a graceful, early-15th-century stone statue of Mary and the Christ Child.

## Église St-Pantaléon

CHURCH

(rue de Vauluisant; ☉2-4.30pm Tue-Sun, until 7pm May-Sep) Looking pretty much like it did three centuries years ago, this Renaissance-style church, with its vaulted wood ceiling, is a great place to see the work of the 16th-century Troyes School – check out the sculptures attached to the columns of the nave. The west facade was added in the 18th century. As in many churches, history sheets are available in French, English and German.

## Hôtel de Vauluisant

MUSEUM

(☎03 25 43 43 20; 4 rue de Vauluisant; adult €3; ☉2-7pm Wed-Sun, 11am-1pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, 2-5pm Wed-Sun, 10am-noon Fri-Sun Oct-Apr) This haunted-looking, Renaissance-style mansion houses two unique museums. Plants used to make dyes and oil paints in the Middle Ages grow in the courtyard.

### DID YOU KNOW...?

Chances are Troyes has already played at least a cameo role in your life:

» If you've ever read or seen a story about Lancelot or the search for the Holy Grail, you've enjoyed creations of the 12th-century poet and troubadour Chrétien (Chrestien) de Troyes (1135–83), who was, as his name indicates, a local boy.

» If you've ever purchased gold bullion, you've done so using the troy ounce, a unit of measure derived from exchange standards established in Troyes in the 12th and 13th centuries.

» Every time you've admired a Lacoste shirt, Petit Bateau kids clothing or sexy Dim underwear, you've paid homage to a brand name created right here in France's historic knit-wear capital.

## Musée de l'Art Troyen

Redesigned in 2009, the Museum of Troyes Art features the evocative paintings, stained glass and statuary (stone and wood) of the Troyes School, which flourished here during the economic prosperity and artistic ferment of the early 16th century.

## Musée de la Bonneterie

The Hosiery Museum showcases the sock-strewn story of Troyes' 19th-century knitting industry.

## Apothicaire de l'Hôtel-Dieu-le-Comte

MUSEUM

(☎03 25 80 98 97; quai des Comtes de Champagne; adult €2; ☉10am or 11am-1pm & 2-7pm Thu-Sun & afternoon Wed May-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Fri-Sun Oct-Apr) If you come down with an old-fashioned malady – scurvy, perhaps, or unbalanced humours – the place to go is this fully outfitted, wood-panelled pharmacy from 1721.

## Sleeping

A number of hotels face the train station.

### Hôtel Arlequin

HOTEL €

(☎03 25 83 12 70; www.hotelarlequin.com; 50 rue de Turenne; d €55-58, with shared toilet €43; ☉reception closed 12.30-2pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-4pm Sun & holidays; ☎☎) Lovingly kept and efficiently run, this charming and very yellow hostelry shows good taste all round, from the smart custard facade to the lemony breakfast room. The 28 cheerful rooms come with antique furnishings, high ceilings and *commedia dell'arte* playfulness. No lift.

### Hôtel Les Comtes de Champagne

HOTEL €

(☎03 25 73 11 70; www.comtesdechampagne.com; 56 rue de la Monnaie; d €53-88, q €71-102, d with washbasin €35; ☎☎) The same massive wooden beams have kept this super-welcoming 37-room place more or less vertical since the 16th century. We love the bright courtyard lobby, the flower boxes and the 12th-century cellar. A huge and very romantic double goes for €88. Bicycles are available for rent. No lift.

### Le Relais St-Jean

HOTEL €€

(☎03 25 73 89 90; www.relais-st-jean.com; 51 rue Paillet de Montabert; d €95-145; ☎☎☎) On a narrow medieval street in the heart of the old city, this hotel has 25 contemporary rooms, a mini-tropical hothouse, a musical jacuzzi with coloured underwater lights, a small fitness centre and facilities for the

## RASHI, BIBLE COMMENTATOR EXTRAORDINAIRE

Under the protection of the counts of Champagne, Troyes was home to a small Jewish community during the 11th and 12th centuries. Its most illustrious member was Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (1040–1105), better known as Rashi (Rachi in French).

Rashi's commentaries on the Bible and the Talmud combine literal and nonliteral methods of interpretation and make extensive use of allegories, parables and symbolic meanings. Even a millennium later, they are still vastly important to Jews and have also had an impact on interpretations of the Christian Bible. Rashi's habit of explaining difficult words and passages in the local French vernacular – transliterated into Hebrew characters – has made his writings an important resource for scholars of Old French. In 1475 (a mere three decades after Gutenberg), Rashi's Bible commentary became the first book to be printed in Hebrew.

Troyes' striking **Monument Rashi** (rue Jules Lebocey), a white-and-black globe that spells out Rashi's acronym in Hebrew letters, stands very near the site of the long-gone Jewish cemetery where he is believed to have been buried.

disabled. There's direct access from the underground car park (€10).



### Eating

Troyes has a dynamic and ever-improving cuisine scene. Rue Champeaux, which extends westward from the Hôtel de Ville, has the city's highest concentration of restaurants, cafés and crêperies, though few rise much above the ordinary. Student-oriented eateries can be found just west of the cathedral along rue de la Cité.

Locals are enormously proud of the city's specialities: *andouillettes de Troyes* (sausages made with strips of pigs' intestines) and *tête de veau* (calf's head served without the brain). As far as most non-locals are concerned, they're an acquired taste.

### La Mignardise

TRADITIONAL FRENCH €€

(☎03 25 73 15 30; 1 ruelle des Chats; weekday lunch menu €23, other menus €29-59; ☺closed Mon & dinner Sun) Traditional French cuisine, fresh and seasonal, is elegantly served beneath ancient wooden beams, 19th-century mouldings and ultramodern halogen lamps. The chef is a particular fan of fish, with plenty of mains from the briny deep.

### Au Jardin Gourmand

TRADITIONAL FRENCH €€

(☎03 25 73 36 13; 31 rue Paillot de Montabert; weekday lunch menu €17, mains €19-23; ☺closed Sun & lunch Mon) Elegant without being overly formal, this intimate restaurant – with a summer terrace – uses only the freshest ingredients for its classic French and *champeinois* dishes; among the latter are no fewer than 11 varieties of *andouillette*. About 20 vintages from the estimable wine list are available by the glass.

### L'Ô à la Bouche

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎03 25 41 11 09; 14 rue de Turenne; 2-/3-course weekday lunch menus €12.50/15, dinner menus €20-27; ☺closed Mon, lunch Sat & dinner Sun) Centuries-old wood panelling and sleek table settings harmoniously create the perfect ambience for enjoying dishes described by the chef as *style bistrot amélioré* ('improved' bistro-style French) at midday and *semi-gastronomique* in the evening.

### Self-catering



### Covered Market

FOOD MARKET €

(place de la Halle; ☺8am-12.45pm & 3.30-7pm Mon-Thu, 7am-7pm Fri & Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun) Fruit, veggies and cheese.

### Monoprix

SUPERMARKET €

(1st fl, 71 rue Émile Zola) Up the escalator in a half-timbered house.

### Carrefour Cité

GROCERIES €

(37 rue Raymond Poincaré; ☺7am-10pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun)



### Drinking & Entertainment

#### La Maison du Boulanger

BOX OFFICE

(☎03 25 40 15 55; 42 rue Paillot de Montabert; www.maisonduboulangier.com, in French; ☺closed Sun) Sells tickets to concerts and other cultural events.

#### Dixi Café

BAR

(12 rue Pithou; ☺3pm-3am Tue-Sat) A convivial neighbourhood bar that draws an arty crowd, including students. Among the sipping options: Guinness (€4.50), Champagne (€5.50) and the house speciality, *rhum arrangé* (fruit-infused rum). Has live music – rock, reggae, jazz, French *chansons* – every Friday and Saturday from about 10pm.





## Shopping

In the city centre, handsome rue Émile Zola is lined with shops.

### Magasins d'Usine

FACTORY OUTLETS

(closed Sun) Troyes is famous across France for its factory outlets, a legacy of the now largely *delocalisé* (outsourced-overseas) local knitwear industry. Brand-name sportswear, underwear, baby clothes, shoes and so on – discontinued styles, unsold stock, returns, prototypes – attract bargain-hunters by the coachload.

Most stores are in two main zones. **St-Julien-les-Villas** is about 3km south of the centre along bd de Dijon (D671 towards Dijon). Here, **Marques Avenue** ([www.marquesavenue.com](http://www.marquesavenue.com), in French; av de la Maille) boasts 240 name brands. **Pont Ste-Marie** is about 3km northeast of the centre between av Jean Jaurès (D677 towards Châlons-en-Champagne) and av Jules Guesde (D960 towards Nancy). Here, **McArthur Glen Troyes** ([www.mcarthurglen.fr](http://www.mcarthurglen.fr)) is a wedge-shaped strip mall with over 100 shops, while **Marques City** ([www.marquescity.fr](http://www.marquescity.fr)) carries scores of brands in nine buildings.

### Cellier St-Pierre

WINE

([www.celliersaintpierre.fr](http://www.celliersaintpierre.fr); 1 place St-Pierre; closed Sun & Mon) A fine place to purchase bubbly and Aube wines such as *rosé des Riceys*. The cellar has been used since 1840 to distil Prunelle de Troyes (€20 per bottle), a 40 per cent liqueur made with sloe (black-thorn fruit) that's great on ice cream. The modest production facilities, which you can visit, are often fired up on Friday and Saturday mornings.



## Information

**Cyber Café Viardin Micro** (8 rue Viardin; per hr €2; 2-7pm Mon, 9.30am-noon & 2-7pm Tue-Sat) Internet access half a block west of the Hôtel Arlequin.

**Post office** (38 rue Louis Ulbach) Also exchanges currency.

**Tourist office** ([www.tourisme-troyes.com](http://www.tourisme-troyes.com)) Has two helpful bureaux: train station (03 25 82 62 70; 16 bd Carnot; 9am-12.30pm &

2-6pm Mon-Sat, also 10am-1pm Sun & holidays Nov-early Apr); city centre (03 25 73 36 88; rue Mignard; 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Sun & holidays, closed Nov-early Apr). The latter faces the west facade of Église St-Jean.



## Getting There & Away

**BUS** The best way to get to Reims is by bus (see p286). Departures are from the very last bus berth to the right as you approach the train station; a schedule is posted. The **bus station office** (03 25 71 28 42; 8.30am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri), run by Courriers de l'Aube, is in the side of the train station.

**CAR** There's a huge free car park three blocks south of the Hôtel Arlequin – take rue de Turenne, cross the roundabout and turn right. **National Citer** (03 25 73 27 37; 10 rue Voltaire) rents cars. Find it a block south of the train station, near place Général Patton.

**TRAIN** Troyes is on the rather isolated train line that links Mulhouse (€40, three hours) in Alsace with Paris Gare de l'Est (€24, 1½ hours, 10 to 14 daily). To get to Dijon (€29, 2½ to four hours), change in Chaumont.



## Getting Around

**BICYCLE** Bicycles can be rented from **Hôtel Les Comtes de Champagne** (03 25 73 11 70; [www.comtesdechampagne.com](http://www.comtesdechampagne.com); 56 rue de la Monnaie; per half-day/full day/two days/week €8/12/20/60).

**TAXI** Call 03 25 78 30 30.

## Champagne Route of the Côte des Bar

Although the Aube *département* ([www.aube-champagne.com](http://www.aube-champagne.com)), of which Troyes is the capital, is a major producer of Champagne (it has about 67 sq km of vineyards, 85% of them pinot noir and 15% chardonnay), it gets a fraction of the recognition accorded to the Marne. Much of the acrimony dates back to 1909, when winemakers of the Aube were excluded from the growing area for Champagne's AOC. Two years later, they were also forbidden to sell their grapes to producers up north, provoking a revolt by local *vignerons*, months of strikes and a situation so chaotic that the army was called in. Only in 1927 were the Aube growers fully certified as producers of genuine Champagne, but by then the Marne had established market domination.

Today, Champagne production in the southeastern corner of the Aube – just



## SELF-GUIDED TOUR

The tourist offices in Troyes can supply you with an **audioguide tour** (€5.50) of the old city in French, English, German, Italian or Dutch.

north of Burgundy's Châtillonnais vineyards (see p410) – is relatively modest in scale, though the reputation of the area's wines has been on an upward trajectory in recent years.

The 220km Côte des Bar Champagne Route does curlicues and loop-the-loops through austere fields, neat vineyards and forestland in an area 30km to 50km east and southeast of Troyes. Great for a deliciously leisurely drive, it passes through stone-built villages that are bedecked with flowers in the spring. Tourist offices, including the one in Troyes, can supply map-brochures. The selected highlights that follow are listed from northeast to southwest.

### COLOMBEY-LES-DEUX-ÉGLISES

POP 670

Charles de Gaulle lived in this village ([www.colombey-les-deux-eglises.com](http://www.colombey-les-deux-eglises.com), in French) from 1934 – except, obviously, during WWII – until his death in 1970. It is named after two historic *églises* (churches), one a parish church, the other a Cluniac priory.

Coachloads of (mostly older) French people flock here to visit CDG's home, **La Boissérie** ([www.charles-de-gaulle.org](http://www.charles-de-gaulle.org), in French; adult €4; ☉10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Wed-Mon, open daily Apr-Sep, closed mid-Dec-early Feb), its furnishings unchanged since he was laid to rest in the village-centre **ci-metière** (churchyard). Tours (English brochure available) begin at the ticket office, situated across D23 from the house, on the Colombey's southern edge.

The hill just north of town (on D619) is crowned by a 43.5m-high **Croix de Lorraine** (Lorraine Cross; erected 1972), symbol of France's WWII Resistance. Nearby is the impressive **Mémorial Charles de Gaulle** (<http://memorial-charlesdegaulle.fr>, in French; adult €13; ☉10am-5.30pm, until 7pm May-Sep, closed Tue Oct-Apr), opened in 2008, whose graphic, easily digestible exhibits, rich in photos, form an admiring biography of France's greatest modern statesman. Displays help visitors untangle such complicated mid-20th-century events as the Algerian war and the creation of the Fifth Republic, and consider the ways in which De Gaulle's years in power (1958–69) affected French culture, style and economic growth. Audioguides are available. The site affords breathtaking, sublime views of the Haute-Marne countryside.

Colombey-les-Deux-Églises is 72km east of Troyes along D619; taking A5 to exit 23 (88km) is a bit faster.

### BAYEL

POP 875

Thanks to the **Cristallerie Royale de Champagne** (Royal Champagne Glassworks; ☎03 25 92 42 68; [www.royaledechampagne.com](http://www.royaledechampagne.com); place de l'Église), established by a family of glassmakers from Murano, Italy, this quiet village has been a centre of crystal manufacture since 1678. To see the production process, take a **factory tour** (adult/student €5/2.30; ☉9.30 & 11am Mon-Fri, closed late Jul-late Aug), which begins at the **tourist office** (☎03 25 92 42 68; 2 rue Belle Verrière; ☉9.15am-1pm & 2.15-6pm, closed Sunday morning, also closed Sunday afternoon Oct-Mar). Walk through the tourist office to get to the small **Musée du Cristal** (Crystal Museum; Écomusée; adult €3.80; ☉same as tourist office), which illustrates how crystal is made (ask for a guide sheet in English); the film has soundtracks in French, English and German. For lovely but fragile gifts, head to the **Cristalleries de Champagne outlet shop** (☉closed Sun), next to the tourist office.

Bayel is 11km southwest of Colombey-les-Deux-Églises.

### ABBAYE DE CLAIRVAUX

Bernard de Clairvaux (1090–1153), nemesis of Abelard and preacher of the Second Crusade, founded this hugely influential Cistercian **monastery** (☎03 25 27 52 55; [www.abbayedclairvaux.com](http://www.abbayedclairvaux.com), in French; adult €7; ☉tours begin 11am & 2.30pm or 3pm, additional tours Wed-Sun Mar-Oct, closed Mon & Tue Nov-Feb, may also be closed Wed-Sun mid-Dec–Feb) in 1115. Since the time of Napoléon, the complex has served as one of France's highest-security prisons. Past 'guests' have included Carlos the Jackal; two prisoners who staged a revolt here in 1971 were guillotined.

Several historic abbey buildings have recently been opened to the public. Tours take in some 12th-century structures, built in the austere Cistercian tradition, but more interesting is the half-abandoned, 18th-century **Grand Cloître**, where you can see collective 'chicken coop' cells (from the 1800s) and individual cells (used until 1971). For security reasons, visitors need to bring ID, mobile phones must be off, and photography is prohibited.

The abbey is on D396 8km south of Bayel and 6km north of A5 exit 23.

**ESSOYES**

POP 710

It's easy to see why Renoir liked Essoyes ([www.essoyes.fr](http://www.essoyes.fr), in French) so much that he spent his last 25 summers – and was buried – here: it's one of the area's prettiest villages, with neat stone houses and a riverfront that glows golden in the late afternoon sun. The great Impressionist's studio, **Atelier Renoir** ([www.renoir-aube-champagne.com](http://www.renoir-aube-champagne.com)), is 150m off D67 at the western edge of town; it was being renovated when we visited, but should have reopened by the time you read this.

On the main street through town (D67), you'll find the **tourist office** (☎03 25 29 61 34; [otee@orange.fr](mailto:otee@orange.fr); 12 rue Gambetta) and, behind it, a spiky 19th-century building, known as the **Château**, that looks like a cross between a castle and a haunted house (it's now a school).

Just northeast of town, up the slope from the Gendarmerie (on D67), the **Hôtel des Canotiers** (☎03 25 38 61 08; [www.hoteldescanotiers.com](http://www.hoteldescanotiers.com); d €69-74, q €112; ☹closed 20 Dec-6 Jan & mid-Feb-mid-Mar; @☎☎) has 14 rooms that are modern, upbeat, spacious and practical; each is named after a famous Renoir canvas.

Picnic supplies can be bought on the main square at the **Petit Casino grocery**

(5 rue Gambetta; ☎7am-12.15pm & 4.30-7.15pm Mon, 7am-12.15pm & 3-7.15pm Tue-Sat, 9am-noon Sun & holidays).

Essoyes is 49km southeast of Troyes.

**LES RICEYS**

POP 1430

Running along both banks of the picturesque River Laigne, the *commune* of Les Riceys consists of three adjacent villages (Ricey-Bas, Ricey-Haute-Rive and Ricey-Haut) and is famous for its three churches, and for growing wines belonging to three different AOC wines. Its best-known product is *rosé des Riceys*, an exclusive pinot noir rosé that can be made only in particularly sunny years and was a special favourite of Louis XIV. Annual production of this – when there is any – hovers around 65,000 bottles. Lots of Champagne wineries are nestled along and near D70.

For more information, including details on walking circuits through vine and vale, contact the **tourist office** (☎03 25 29 15 38; [www.lesriceys-champagne.com](http://www.lesriceys-champagne.com), in French; 14 place des Héros de la Résistance, Ricey-Haut; ☎9am-noon & 2-5pm, closed Wed, also closed Sat, Sun & holidays Sep-Apr).

Les Riceys is 47km southeast of Troyes and 18km southwest of Essoyes.

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